IN THE CLAIMS

1.   (Currently Amended) A method for communicating between a purchaser and a plurality of sellers in an online marketplace, said method comprising the steps of:

~~transmitting a request for bid for a good or service to the sellers via an electronic network, the request for bid not identifying the purchaser;~~

receiving at a first user node of an electronic network, from a user computer node associated with a purchaser, a request for bid for a good or service to be sent from the purchaser to at least one seller through a server, the first user node being separate from the server and the first user node being separate from the purchaser and being separate from the at least one seller;

determining, at the first user node, whether or not to send the request for bid to the server;

forwarding, in response to determining to not send the request for bid to the server node, the request for bid from the first user node to a second user node of the electronic network through a direct connection, the second user node being separate from the server and the second user node being separate from the purchaser and separate from the at least one seller, wherein the request for bid, when forwarded, does not identify either the purchaser or the first user node;

sending, in response to determining to send the request for bid to the server node, the request for bid from the first user node to the server node for publication to the at least one seller, wherein the request for bid, when sent, does not identify either the purchaser or the first user node;

receiving at the first user node, through the server, at least one offer for the good or service from at least one ~~of the sellers via the electronic network~~ seller, the ~~sellers~~ at least one seller and the server sending the at least one offer ~~offers~~ not knowing the identity of the purchaser that is receiving the offers and the at least one seller and the server not knowing the identity of the first user node; and

after receiving the offers, communicating a purchase order to one of the at least one seller ~~sellers~~ that submitted an offer in order to purchase the good or service, the

purchase order identifying the purchaser.

2.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

transmitting a statement of interest from the purchaser through the server to the at least one seller ~~to the sellers~~ via the electronic network, the statement of interest not identifying the purchaser to the server and not identifying the purchaser to the at least one seller; and

receiving information in response to the statement of interest from at least one of the sellers via the electronic network, the sellers sending the information through the server, wherein the server and the at least one seller do not know ~~not knowing~~ the identity of the purchaser.

3.   (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein in the step of transmitting the request for bid, the request for bid is transmitted to only the sellers that sent the information to the purchaser.

4.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the request for bid is associated with one or more selected category, the method further comprising the steps of:

configuring a plurality of publish-subscribe channels, wherein each publish and subscribe channel in the plurality of publish-subscribe channels is associated with a respective category of goods and services;

accepting subscription requests from a subset of the at least one seller for at least one selected publish-subscribe channel within the plurality of publish-subscribe channels; and

~~wherein in the step of~~ transmitting the request for bid, ~~the request for bid~~ for the good or service ~~is sent~~ to the subset of ~~all of~~ the sellers that subscribe to ~~a~~ the at least one selected publish-subscribe channel ~~relating to the good or service~~.

5-7.   (Cancelled)

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 8 1, further comprising the steps of:

receiving, at the server, a statement of interest from the purchaser via the electronic network, the statement of interest not identifying the purchaser; and

transmitting information in response to the statement of interest to the purchaser via the electronic network, the seller and the server sending the information not knowing the identity of the purchaser.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 8 1, wherein the purchase order is the first communication in a transaction that identifies the purchaser to the seller.

11-15 (Cancelled)

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14 1, further comprising the steps of:

receiving, at the server, a statement of interest from a purchaser via the electronic network, the statement of interest not identifying the purchaser;

transmitting the statement of interest that does not identify the purchaser to the sellers via the electronic network;

receiving information in response to the statement of interest from at least one of the sellers via the electronic network, the sellers sending the information not knowing the identity of the purchaser; and

transmitting, from the server, the information to the purchaser, wherein the server does not know the identity of the purchaser.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein in the step of transmitting the request for bid, the request for bid is transmitted to only the sellers that sent the information in response to the statement of interest.

18-22. (Cancelled)

23.   (Currently Amended) The machine-readable medium of claim ~~22~~32, wherein said program further contains instructions for performing the step of communicating a purchase order from the purchaser to one of the sellers that submitted an offer in order to purchase the good or service, the purchase order identifying the purchaser.

24.   (Currently Amended) The machine-readable medium of claim ~~22~~32, wherein said program further contains instructions for performing the steps of:

~~receiving a statement of interest from a purchaser via the electronic network, the statement of interest not identifying the purchaser;~~

transmitting the statement of interest <u>from the purchaser through the server to the at least one seller via the electronic network, the statement of interest</u> ~~that does~~ not ~~identify~~ <u>identifying</u> the purchaser <u>to the server and not identifying the purchaser to the at least one seller</u> ~~to the sellers via the electronic network~~;

receiving information in response to the statement of interest from at least one of the sellers via the electronic network, the sellers sending the information <u>through the server, wherein the server and the at least one seller do not know</u> ~~not knowing~~ the identity of the purchaser<u>;</u> ~~and~~

~~transmitting the information to the purchaser.~~

25-27. (Cancelled)

28.　(New) An electronic communications system, comprising:

a server;

a user computer node, separate from the server;

a second user node, separate from the user computer node and the server;

a first user node, separate from the user computer node, the server and the second user node, the first user node adapted to:

receiving, from the user computer node associated with a purchaser, a request for bid for a good or service to be sent from the purchaser to at least one seller through the server

wherein the first user node is separate from the purchaser and is separate from the at least one seller;

determining whether or not to send the request for bid to the server;

forwarding, in response to determining to not send the request for bid to the server node, the request for bid from the first user node to the second user node of the electronic network through a direct connection, the second user node being separate from the purchaser and separate from the at least one seller, wherein the request for bid, when forwarded, does not identify either the purchaser or the first user node;

sending, in response to determining to send the request for bid to the server node, the request for bid from the first user node to the server node for publication to the at least one seller, wherein the request for bid, when sent, does not identify either the purchaser or the first user node, and

wherein the user computer node is adapted to:

receiving, through the server, at least one offer for the good or service from at least one seller, the at least one seller and the server sending the at least one offer not knowing the identity of the purchaser that is receiving the offers and the at least one seller and the server not knowing the identity of the first user node, and

after receiving the offers, communicating a purchase order to one of the at least one seller that submitted an offer in order to purchase the good or service, the purchase order identifying the purchaser.

29. (New) The electronic communications system of claim 28, wherein the server is further adapted to:

transmitting a statement of interest from the purchaser through the server to the at least one seller via the electronic network, the statement of interest not identifying the purchaser to the server and not identifying the purchaser to the at least one seller; and

receiving information in response to the statement of interest from at least one of the sellers via the electronic network, the sellers sending the information through the server, wherein the server and the at least one seller do not know the identity of the purchaser.

30. (New) The electronic communications system of claim 29, wherein in server is further adapted to transmitting the request for bid to only the sellers that sent the information to the purchaser.

31. (New) The electronic communications system of claim 28, wherein the request for bid is associated with one or more selected category, wherein the server is further adapted to:

configuring a plurality of publish-subscribe channels, wherein each publish and subscribe channel in the plurality of publish-subscribe channels is associated with a respective category of goods and services;

accepting subscription requests from a subset of the at least one seller for at least one selected publish-subscribe channel within the plurality of publish-subscribe channels; and

transmitting the request for bid for the good or service to the subset of the sellers that subscribe to the at least one selected publish-subscribe channel.

32. (New) A machine-readable medium tangibly encoded with a program for operating an online marketplace, said program containing instructions for performing the steps of:

receiving at a first user node of an electronic network, from a user computer

node associated with a purchaser, a request for bid for a good or service to be sent from the purchaser to at least one seller through a server, the first user node being separate from the server and the first user node being separate from the purchaser and being separate from the at least one seller;

determining, at the first user node, whether or not to send the request for bid to the server;

forwarding, in response to determining to not send the request for bid to the server node, the request for bid from the first user node to a second user node of the electronic network through a direct connection, the second user node being separate from the server and the second user node being separate from the purchaser and separate from the at least one seller, wherein the request for bid, when forwarded, does not identify either the purchaser or the first user node;

sending, in response to determining to send the request for bid to the server node, the request for bid from the first user node to the server node for publication to the at least one seller, wherein the request for bid, when sent, does not identify either the purchaser or the first user node;

receiving at the first user node, through the server, at least one offer for the good or service from at least one seller, the at least one seller and the server sending the at least one offer not knowing the identity of the purchaser that is receiving the offers and the at least one seller and the server not knowing the identity of the first user node; and

after receiving the offers, communicating a purchase order to one of the at least one seller that submitted an offer in order to purchase the good or service, the purchase order identifying the purchaser.

33.   (New) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

determining, at the second user node, whether or not to send the request for bid to the server node;

forwarding, in response to determining to not send the request for bid to a server node, the request for bid from the second user node to a third user node of the electronic network through a direct connection, the third user node not being the server and the second node being associated with a user other than the purchaser and the at

least one seller; and

sending, in response to determining to send the request for bid to a server node, the request for bid from the first user node to the server node for publication to the at least one seller.